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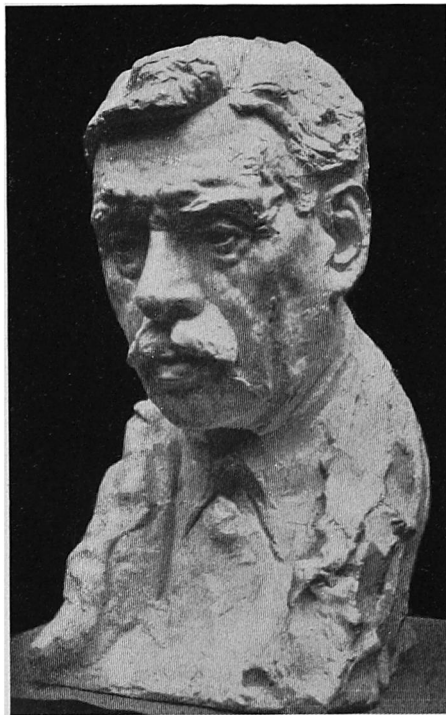
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THE ANARCH-SCULPTOR—RODIN

Pedanticism is an affliction of most of the world's great anarchists. Unfortunately it has veiled them—often sulphurously—from the appreciation of their time, and the brave little band of disciples, blind with enthusiasm, hasty under a strong sense of injustice, lays the charge of neglect at the great world's doors. Perhaps it is a pity that the world has not learned to be more tolerant of the eccentricities of its various and manifold genius. In the mean time we have learned to take our great world-types more seriously, have learned to accord them a somewhat dilettantish though more sincere ear—a not uncultured ear. We have grown to be a little more patient with the visionary, to whom it has been customary to attribute an undue proportion of our blunders. Time, however, has taught us, above all, that it is to the dreamers and poets, the saints and mystics, for whom one glimpse is sufficient. Often we are caught humanly enough concerning ourselves with “the cliques and coteries of a self-conscious culture.” But Auguste Rodin is no pedant nor is he as yet a cult. The very nature of his work, the accent of his message, precludes him from such a misfortune. He is anti-pathetic to the sentimentalists and consequently a potent influence in the thinking world. With Rodin it is not merely a question of refined form, redolent of the schools, and appealing to a conventional public through a meretricious idealism. It is rather the infinite suggestiveness of a broad human realism, never coarse or repulsive, and one that has done much to cleanse us of bathos and cheap sentimentalism.



BUST OF FALAUÏÈRE
By Auguste Rodin

Hence the old standards of criticism cannot be applied to the work of such a man, and it is satisfying to note the modern critic is disposed to listen to a new message more patiently than his brother of eld. In Rodin he is dealing with a new force, quite unconventional,

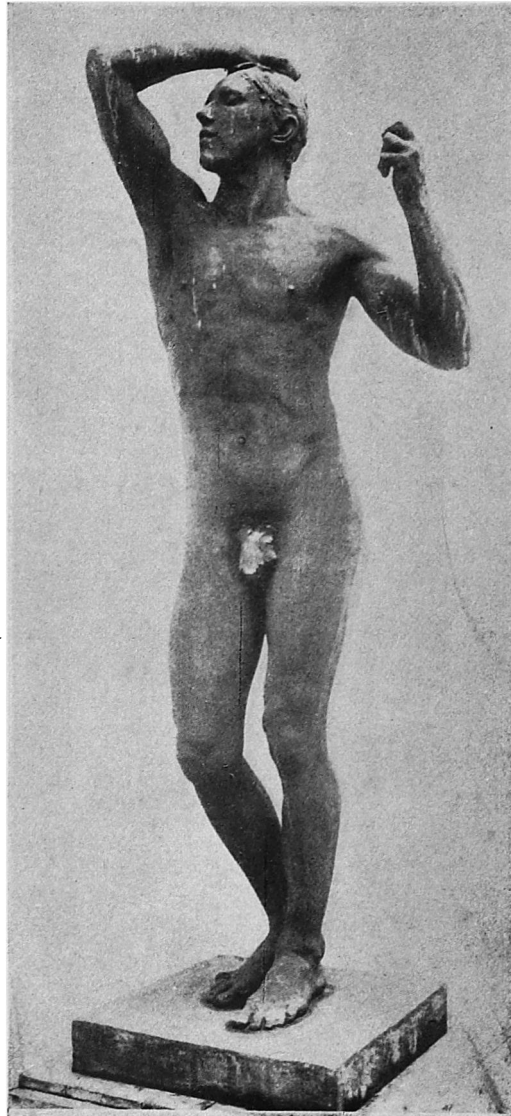


AUGUSTE RODIN
By E. J. Steichen

and above all wholly sane. There is nothing of the doctrinaire about this quiet, patient sculptor, merely a seriousness, and if anything, a little sadness. His fame has magically spread beyond his native land. In America, at St. Louis, he was represented by "Le Penseur," while in Europe, at the last Düsseldorf Exhibition, an

entire room was devoted to his work. In England he has succeeded Whistler as president of the august International Society of Artists.

When the author of an admirable brochure says that Rodin "reflects in his work the complex temper of his age more completely than any other living sculptor," he gives us the substance of the whole matter, for Rodin's individualism cannot be merged into any existing school, cannot be placed under any definite category. Alone he stands, titanic, insular—the anarch of modern sculpture. Early he served his apprenticeship before the old classicism. Now he has been weaned away from the antique by the peculiar spirit of the times, called, indeed, to become a truthful and no less sympathetic interpreter of the Zeitgeist. He is the son of a not incurious, speculative age—one rightly interested in its behalf, in primal values. In this capacity he has much to say, even though he is repeating much that has long remained unsaid. Some one has said, "In life we flounder, art is our flounderings shown." Perhaps the cynicism is peculiarly applicable to plastic art, but we know that it does not obtain with Rodin. Broadly human, his attitude toward life is never that of the critical, self-imposed mentor. None the less, his message has



THE BRONZE AGE
By Auguste Rodin

been forceful, and with "The Man with the Broken Nose" and "The Age of Bronze" we have the first encyclic to modern plastic art.

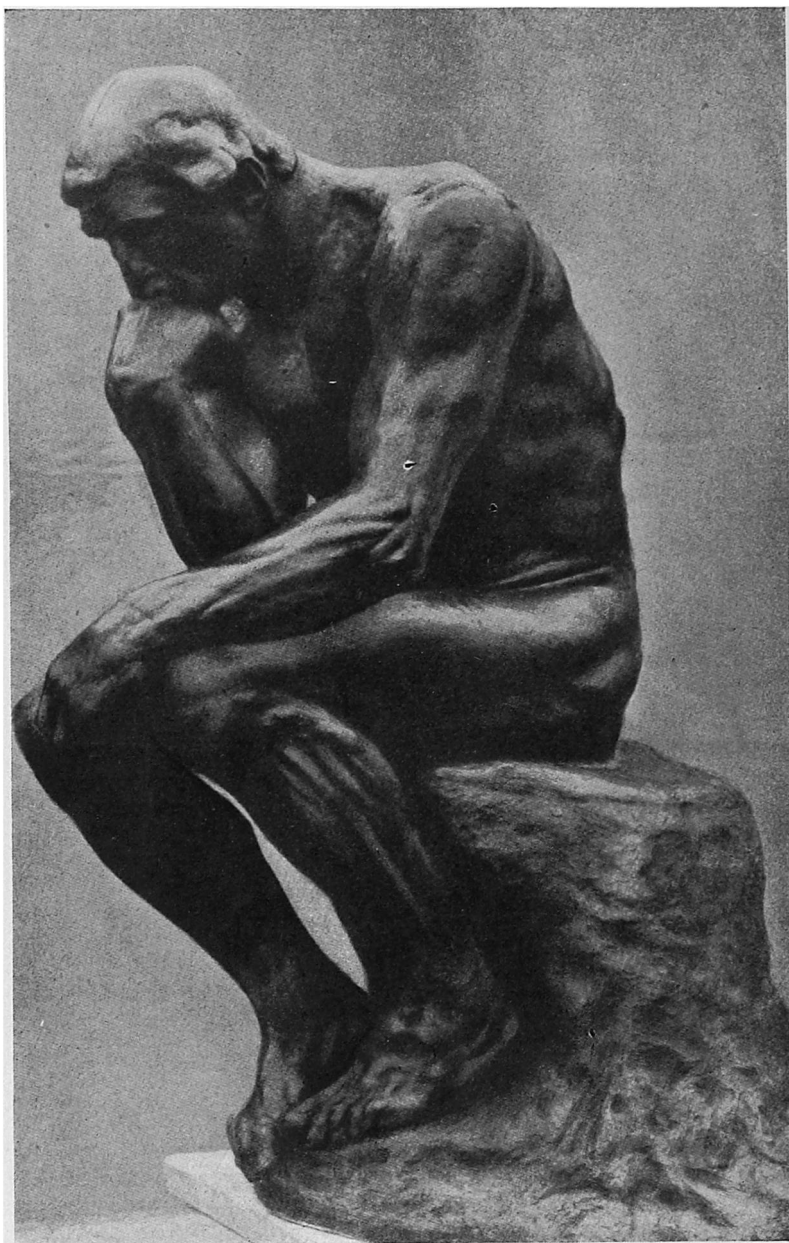
In order to herald the new birth of ideas, of this crusade against artificial convention, Rodin went to the Renaissance, to Michelangelo, coming away with the conviction that Nature exalted was the great good secret of those brave protagonists. Perhaps his chief aim in going to Michelangelo was to derive more strength—sweetness and



THE WAVES
By Auguste Rodin

strength—and how far he succeeded we may now discern. It justifies, at any rate, what Mr. Dircks calls that grand manner! The pilgrimage to Nature beginning with the Barbizons was the inevitable result in a laudable endeavor to disavow the neurotic influence of the Romanticists. Among the Barbizons was Barye, and from him Rodin consciously assumed the precious tradition. Rodin has said: "Nothing is ugly that has life." Barye, Rodin!—each a synthetic exponent of nature in plastic art. The *genre* picture tells too much, leaving nothing to the average intelligence. No wonder this superficial taste soon waned, and turned away hungry—hungry for strong wine and dark meat, to find it in the great masters, Barye and Rodin.

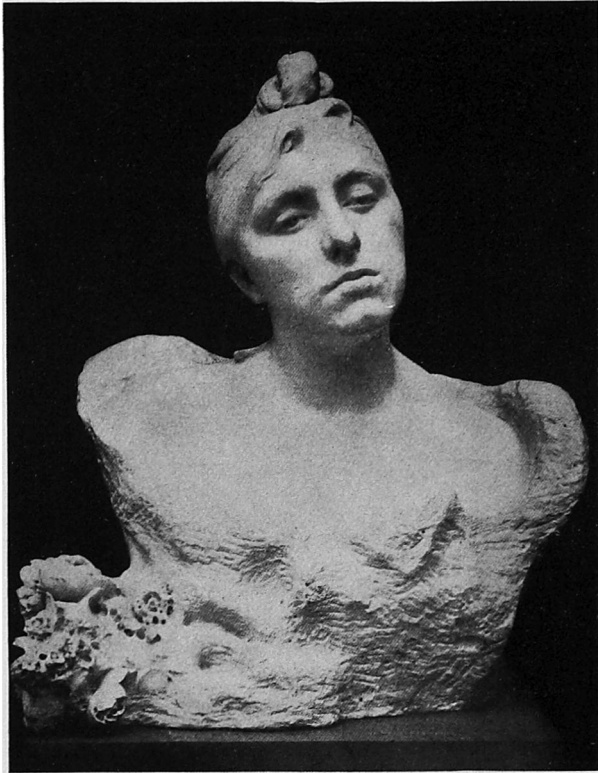
And what a storm of criticism the Balzac aroused! In the



LE PENSEUR
By Auguste Rodin

brochure referred to we have the story of Rodin's careful preparatory studies. Possessing such meager data Rodin went to the only evidence of any man of letters—documentary evidence. He read the *Comedie Humaine* and—but the story is for you to read. However, one piece of evidence is lacking. We would be glad to know Zola's views of the refusal. As president of the society that ordered the statue, he placed it with Rodin, and it would be interesting to know his subsequent attitude.

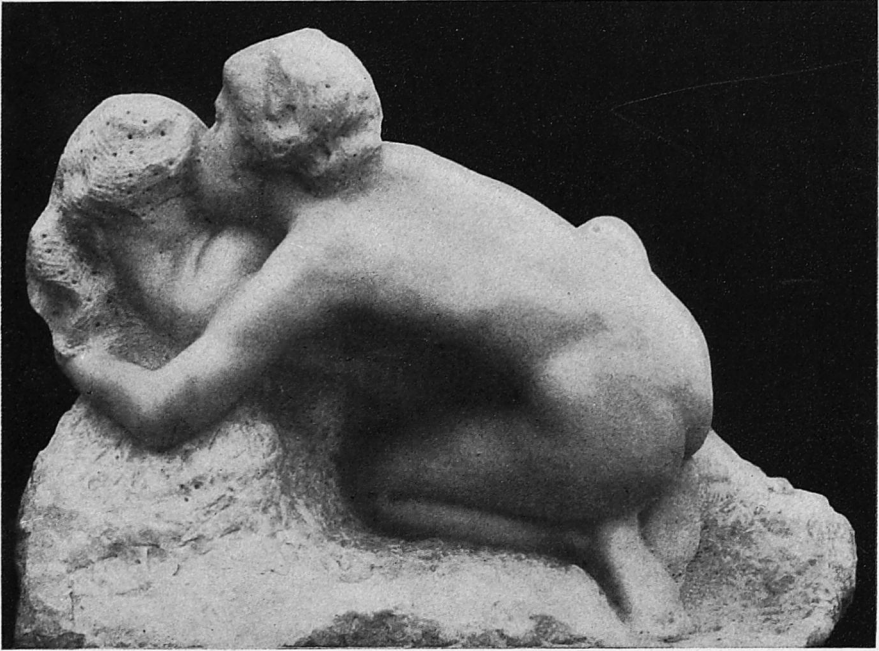
There are some who discover a morbidity in Rodin—surely a wrong interpretation of the large sympathy that enables him to depict great passion clothed in so much native dignity! Rather is it not youth—eternal youth? "The Kiss" is blithe in its youthfulness, so typical of the morning of life, that we would almost suspect the sculptor of deliberately avoiding everything suggestive of "the autumn of the



PORTRAIT BUST
By Auguste Rodin
In the Luxembourg

body." And yet how emblematic, how symbolical is "St. John the Baptist!" At once ascetic, enthusiast, evangelist—all this, and infinitely more! This fervid religious conception of the Baptist gives us merely a deeper insight into Rodin's mind—concerning himself with the forceful issues of life, where he does not hesitate to touch, perhaps realistically, the austere moments of the soul. Says Rodin: "Whatever suggests human emotion, whether of grief or pain, goodness or anger, hate or love, has its individual seal of beauty." Now we understand "The Baptist" and that notable

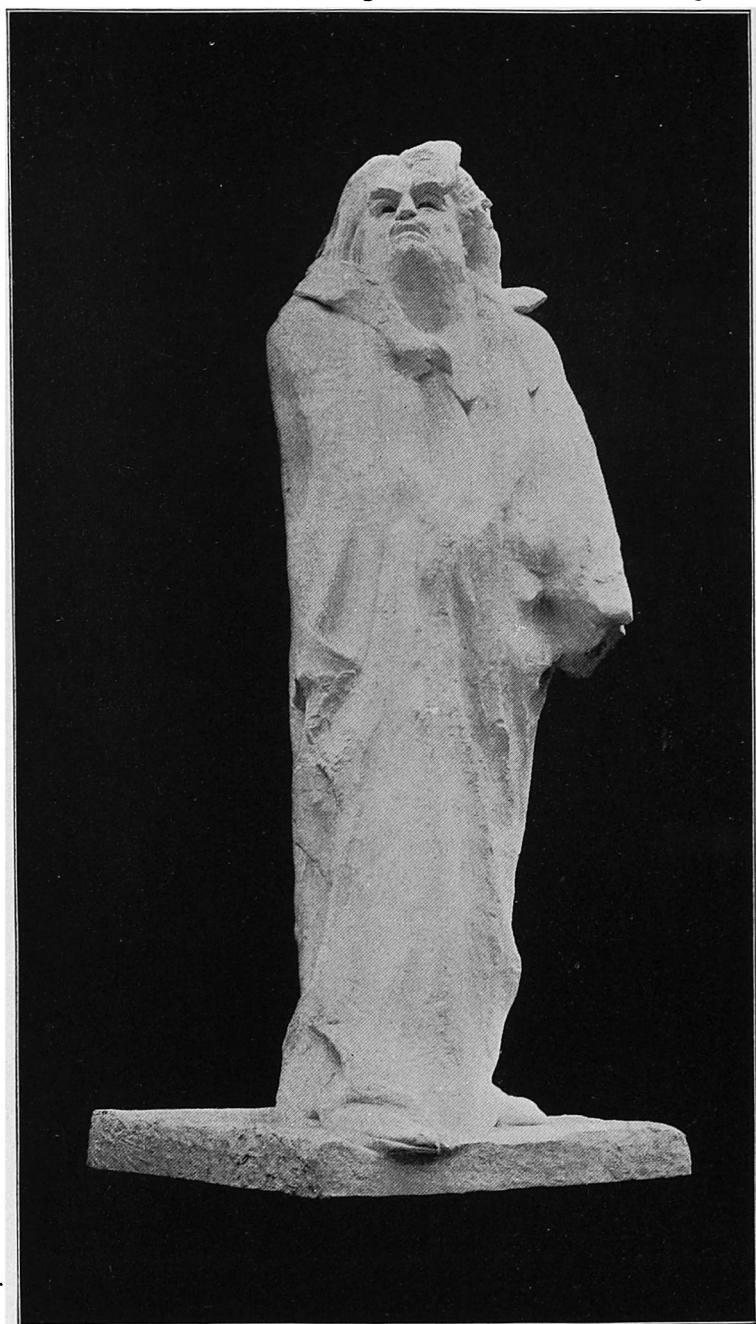
group "The Burgesses of Calais." There is large pathos in the latter, and it is full of emotional tendencies, but nothing to justify the maudlin. Human suffering is here intimately interpreted, and treated with an innate delicacy of feeling. Nothing to detract the intelligent observer is interpolated; indeed, the public intelligence and feelings are always respected. It seems as though we were under the spell of refined emotion, and struck by its lifelike reality,



THE METAMORPHOSIS
By Auguste Rodin

we go away feeling not unlike our painted forefathers in Mr. Kipling's splendid "Ballad of Ung," though not concerning ourselves with his sources of inspiration, never doubting his message.

It is a very simply expressed moral if one must look for it in Rodin, but a dainty one nevertheless, smacking not at all of philistinism. One does not go away with eyes adream, and enthusiastically palming invisible contours, but with the faculties quite awake! The seal of true genius set on work of this kind is peculiar to the artist alone (whatsoever his mode of expression), and indicative of his innermost thoughts, of his tendencies to brood over problems of interest not only to himself, but concerning the general weal. Instinctively his dreams, his thoughts, take life in this individual form of expres-



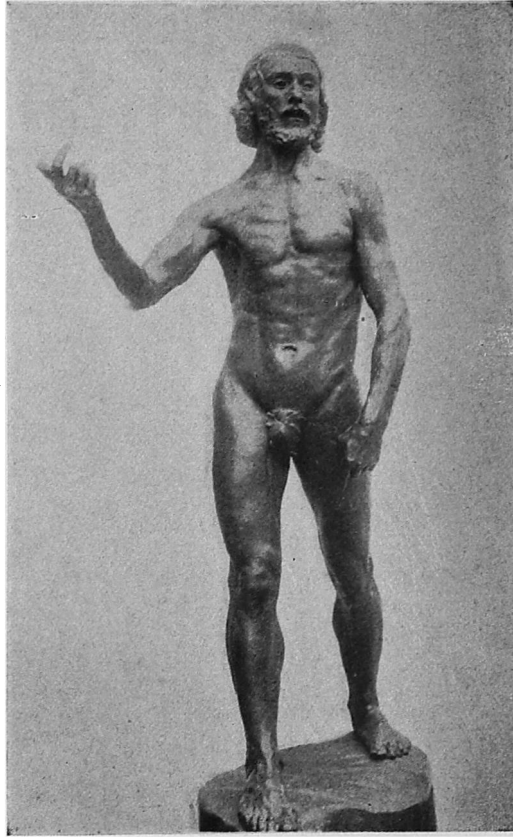
BALZAC
By Auguste Rodin

sion, summarized, so to speak—a quality that provides us with the only intimation of those “dramas of the mind, best seen against imagined tapestries.” In Rodin is it not just this quality that exerts a charm over us, brooding as we are, too, over the same problems and mysteries? In glimpses of such a rare and individual temper we are either attracted or repelled, even puzzled, until we discern the underlying note of familiarity, and thereby divine the purpose of this unorthodox expression. Then each to himself the vision, and each to himself the fitting mode of expression to interpret that vision!

We must not be surprised if Rodin, in the future, will often seem unintelligible, as though the brooding spirit of another world were still upon him. Soon we are to applaud the ‘Balzac,’ to acknowledge that after all there was nothing unwonted in the style of treatment. For there is a wondrous spontaneity about Rodin that must chain the allegiance of the most splenetic critic. It seems, after all, that this virtue must invariably silence adverse criticism, even win over vacillating anchorites, and certainly Rodin’s

originality breathes the unmistakable artist-secret of “the first fine, careless rapture.” And we must always unqualifiedly encourage it.

But surely we cannot be weary of his theme, since we are still interested in sincere things, simple and unaffected! No! It is in work like this that we are reminded that the heart of the world is still young, its song still blithe and refreshing, indeed we can scarcely imagine its ever becoming weary, ever growing old!



ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST
By Auguste Rodin
In the Luxembourg

The world has much yet to hear from and learn from Auguste Rodin. He has struck, if not a new note, at least a vital note that



THE KISS
By Auguste Rodin
In the Luxembourg

will have its influence on sculptors the world over. It is geniuses of this character that we should not decry, but encourage, stimulate, emulate.

W. G. TINCOMBE-FERNANDEZ.